

## **Region 3 GPRA Baseline RCRA Corrective Action Facility**

# **Molycorp, Inc.**

**Caldwell & Green Streets  
Washington, PA 15301  
Congressional District 20  
EPA ID #: PAD030068282**

**Site Property Area: 73 Acres  
Last Updated 6/30/2005**

## **Current Progress at the Site**

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The facility is in the process of being decommissioned under the authority of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). All operations at the facility have ceased and all structures, including storage tanks, on the property have been razed and removed from the site. In fall 2003, Molycorp began a site-wide environmental assessment to address NRC and RCRA Corrective Action concerns on both the former plant property and the company owned former coal gasification plant property located south of Caldwell Avenue. The Site Characterization Report which summarized the field work done in the assessment was written in April 2004. Molycorp submitted a Remedial Investigation Report to PADEP's Land Recycling Program in March 2005 and a Risk Assessment and Remedy Selection Report to PADEP in April 2005. The above reports were submitted by Molycorp to EPA in May 2005 and are currently being reviewed. Molycorp has expressed interest in beginning remedial action at the facility in fall 2005.

The Molycorp facility achieved a "Yes" determination for the Current Human Exposures Under Control Environmental Indicator (EI) in October 2003. EPA is currently evaluating the Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control EI determination.

## **Site Description**

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Molycorp operated a ferrous and nonferrous alloys plant in Washington, PA from the 1920s through 2001. Molybdenite ore was first processed at the plant in 1930. From 1964 to 1970, Molycorp produced a ferrocolumbium alloy from a Brazilian ore (pyrochlore) that contained radioactive thorium as an accessory metal. During processing of the pyrochlore, a thorium-bearing slag was generated, some of which was used as fill material over portions of the site. Much of the material was subsequently excavated and placed into a pile on property south of Caldwell Avenue across the street from the former plant area. About 4,000 cubic yards of thorium-contaminated slag and soil were removed from along the northern property boundary on

land owned by Findlay Refractories Company and placed into roll-off containers. The pile and roll-off containers have been removed from the site and properly disposed of off-site with NRC approval. However, residual radiological contamination remains at certain locations on the site.

In the late 1960s, Molycorp built eight surface impoundments used to recover molybdenum disulfide solids generated by the plant's wet scrubber. When a baghouse replaced the wet scrubber in the mid 1970s, the impoundments were used to hold weak acids and runoff from various plant areas. After the facility was placed on standby at the end of 1991, all liquids were removed from the impoundments. The impoundments have been certified closed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) as of November 1996. A quarterly groundwater monitoring program that includes the sampling of four wells in the former area of the surface impoundments has been ongoing since 1982.

Molycorp purchased the property located south of Caldwell Avenue in August 1975 for additional storage space for the slag they were generating. Shortly after purchasing the property, two coal tar ponds and coal tar within the foundation of the former gasification plant building were discovered. The contents of the north pond and coal tar collected from various noted seep areas were placed into the south pond in 1985. In 1986, the walls of the gasification plant building foundation were cut in half and collapsed into the foundation. The resulting collection of concrete and tar was covered with four feet of clean soil. Shortly after the above work was completed and continuing to the present, seeps of coal tar have been observed at both the north and south ponds, the former plant foundation, and various other locations on the property south of Caldwell Avenue.

## **Site Responsibility**

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RCRA Corrective Action activities at this facility are being conducted under the direction of EPA Region 3 with assistance from the State. Molycorp submitted a Notice of Intent to Remediate (NIR) to PADEP in January 2005, in which it is seeking a release of liability under Act 2 using a combination of Statewide Health Standards and Site-Specific Standards for soil and groundwater.

## **Contaminants**

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Several metals including molybdenum have been detected at concentrations exceeding EPA's risk based concentrations (RBCs) for tap water in groundwater samples from the four wells near the former surface impoundments that are monitored quarterly. While the coal tar has not been found to be a hazardous waste when analyzed by EPA's Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP), the material does contain several semivolatile organic compounds at concentrations above the corresponding soil RBCs. Radiologic thorium contamination is being addressed per the decommissioning plan.

# Institutional Controls

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The need for institutional controls at this facility has not been determined.

## Government Contact

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## Facility Contact

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For more information about EPA's corrective action webpage, including Environmental Indicators, please visit our site at: [www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/correctiveaction.htm](http://www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/correctiveaction.htm)